

Schell-Osage Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage Public Input Summary



Duck hunting at Schell-Osage Conservation Area

Missouri Department of Conservation
April 2017



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) is seeking public input as we develop and revise conservation area management plans.
- The Schell-Osage Conservation Area (CA) is an 8,633-acre conservation area in St. Clair and Vernon counties, which features a combination of habitats including wetlands, upland and bottomland forest, cropland, old fields, and lakes and ponds. It is one of nearly 1,000 conservation areas owned or managed by the Department. Conservation areas support the Department's mission by offering places to restore and conserve fish, forest, and wildlife resources, and providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources. Conservation areas are different from state or local parks that may place a greater emphasis on team sports, recreational activities, or social gatherings.
- The Department conducted a public involvement idea gathering phase (Nov. 1, 2016-Feb. 15, 2017) to gather input as staff begins to develop a 10-year management plan for Schell-Osage CA.
- During this time period, we heard 42 comments from 39 respondents.
- Twenty-one attendees participated in the Schell-Osage Conservation Area Open House Jan. 9, 2017.
- Common themes heard during this idea gathering stage included suggestions to add a permanent pump station, reestablish and expand bottomland hardwoods, enhance fishing opportunities, expand archery deer hunting opportunities, comments on waterfowl hunting blinds, and appreciation for how Schell-Osage CA is managed.
- The Schell-Osage CA planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year area management plan. The draft plan will be available online (likely fall 2017) for a month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

INTRODUCTION

Public Comment on Conservation Area Management Plans

The Missouri Department of Conservation (Department) wants to know what Missourians think about its nearly 1,000 conservation areas around the state. The Department is in the multi-year process of updating management plans for conservation areas and invites public comments. To preview draft management plans and share comments online, visit mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.

Department conservation areas cover almost 1 million public acres for the purpose of restoring and conserving forest, fish, and wildlife resources, and for providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources. Most Missourians are within a 30-minute drive of a Department conservation area.

Missourians care about conservation and use conservation areas for many different reasons. These areas help people discover nature through various activities, and help make Missouri a great place to hunt, fish, and enjoy other outdoor activities. We want to know how conservation areas are important to Missourians. Encouraging public comments on Conservation Area Management Plans is part of the Department's ongoing efforts of working for and with Missourians to sustain healthy forests, fish, and wildlife.

Conservation Area Management Plans focus on natural resource management and public use on conservation areas. The plans do not address regulations on hunting, fishing, and other area uses, which are set by the Conservation Commission and enforced under the *Wildlife Code of Missouri*. The Department will consider all ideas received and will work to balance the issues and interests identified with the responsibility of managing areas for the present and future benefits to forest, fish, wildlife, and people. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into area plans and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, the best roles of the property in its local, regional, and statewide context, and on the professional expertise of Department staff.

Questions? Please contact Missouri Department of Conservation Public Involvement Coordinator, Amy Buechler at 573-522-4115 x3252, or amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov.

Schell-Osage Conservation Area

Schell-Osage CA and the Osage River, which forms the area's north boundary, derive their names from the Osage Indians that once inhabited the area.

Initially purchased in 1957, development of the wetland units and water supply lakes was completed in 1962 and opened to waterfowl hunting in 1964.

The Harry S. Truman Dam and Reservoir was completed in 1979, which affected flood frequency and duration of the Osage River and floodplain, including portions of Schell-Osage CA.

The area features a unique combination of habitats, including wetlands, upland and bottomland forest, cropland, old fields, and lakes and ponds. Also, Little Headwaters, Little Gem, Little Stony Point, Little Savanna, and Little Sandy prairies combine to make up over 40 acres of remnant native prairie, which have been augmented with over 340 acres of restored grasslands.

The 1,425 acres of managed wetlands provides habitat for a wide variety of waterfowl, shore birds, wading birds, and other wetland-dependent species, which makes this area popular for both waterfowl hunters and birders.

Public Involvement

The idea gathering phase for development of the Schell-Osage Conservation Area Management Plan ran from Nov. 1, 2016- Feb. 15, 2017. The objective of this phase was to inform stakeholders about the area planning process and ask them to share their ideas. To communicate about this comment period, staff:

- Developed fliers about Schell-Osage Conservation Area idea gathering phase and posted at Schell-Osage Conservation Area.
- Posted an online comment form available at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans.
- Sent news releases to local media outlets and posted on Missouri Department of Conservation Facebook page and Twitter feed.
- Sent an announcement to the area plan email list (8,000+ recipients).
- Made personal visits; sent mail and email to neighboring landowners, NGOs, and local government offices.
- Conducted a Schell-Osage Conservation Area Open House Jan. 9, 2017.

Next Steps

The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year management plan for Schell-Osage Conservation Area. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely fall 2017) for a two-month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

Who responded?

From Nov. 1, 2016- Feb. 15, 2017, we received 42 comments from 39 respondents for the Schell-Osage Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage.

Table 1. Total number of respondents commenting during the idea gathering phase by respondent category.

Organization Type	Respondents
Individual Citizens (no affiliation listed)	37
Non-governmental Organizations (Show-Me Missouri Backcountry Horsemen, Missouri Stream Team)	2
TOTAL	39

How they responded

Table 2. Total number of each response type received.

Response Type	Comments
Web Comment Form	33
Hard Copy Comment Form	6
Open House Comment	3
TOTAL	42

Where respondents are from

Table 3. Total number of responses categorized by each respondent's location.

State	Respondents	Percent
Missouri	33	85
Kansas	4	10
Arkansas	1	2.5
California	1	2.5
TOTAL	39	100

Map of all respondent locations by ZIP code.

★ = Schell-Osage Conservation Area

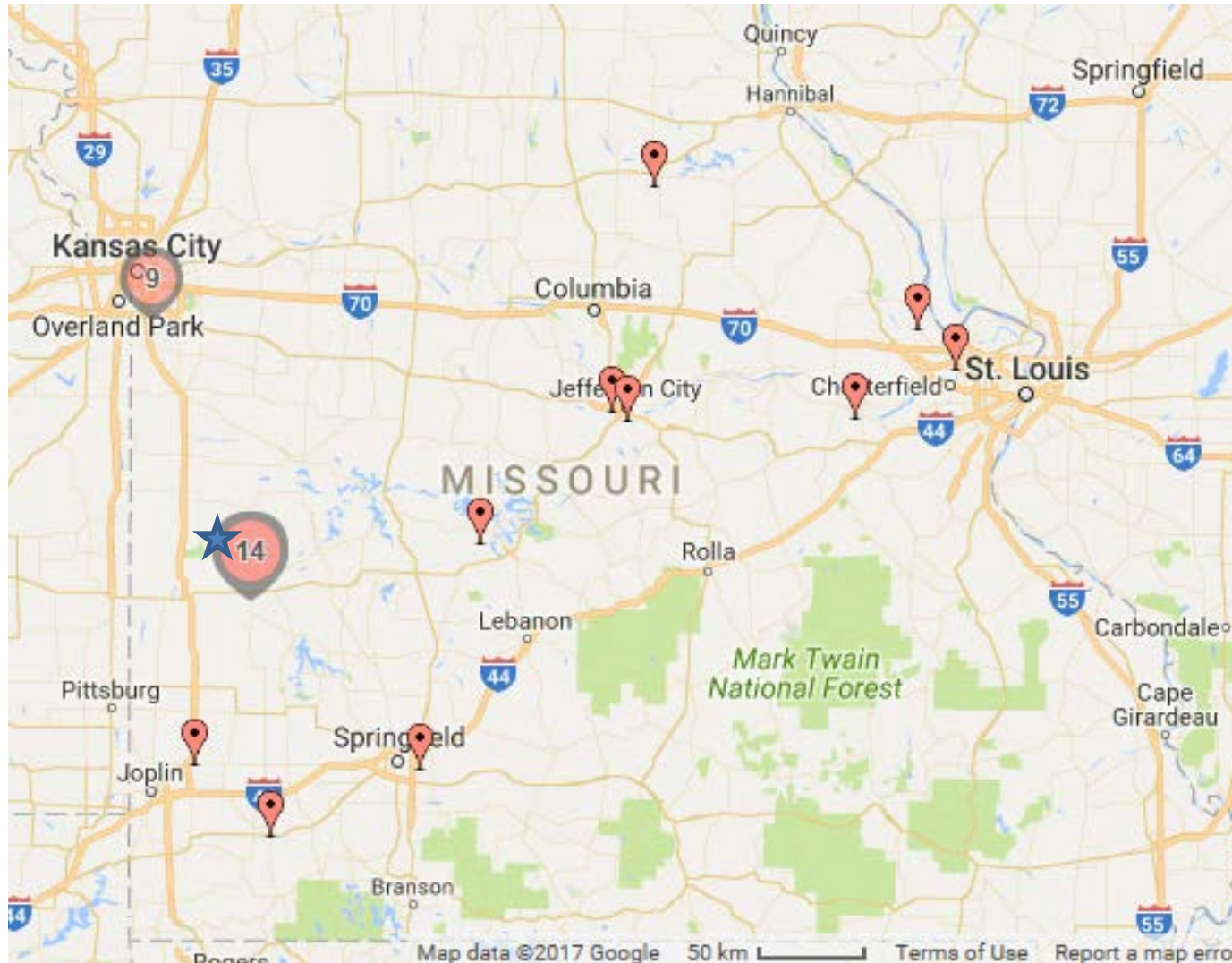
The pinpoints below represent the central point of ZIP codes from which a public comment was received (they do not represent actual street addresses). Shaded circles with numbers show multiple responses from a geographic area.



Map of Missouri respondent locations by ZIP code.

★ = Schell-Osage Conservation Area

The pinpoints below represent the central point of ZIP codes from which a public comment was received (they do not represent actual street addresses). Shaded circles with numbers show multiple responses from a geographic area.

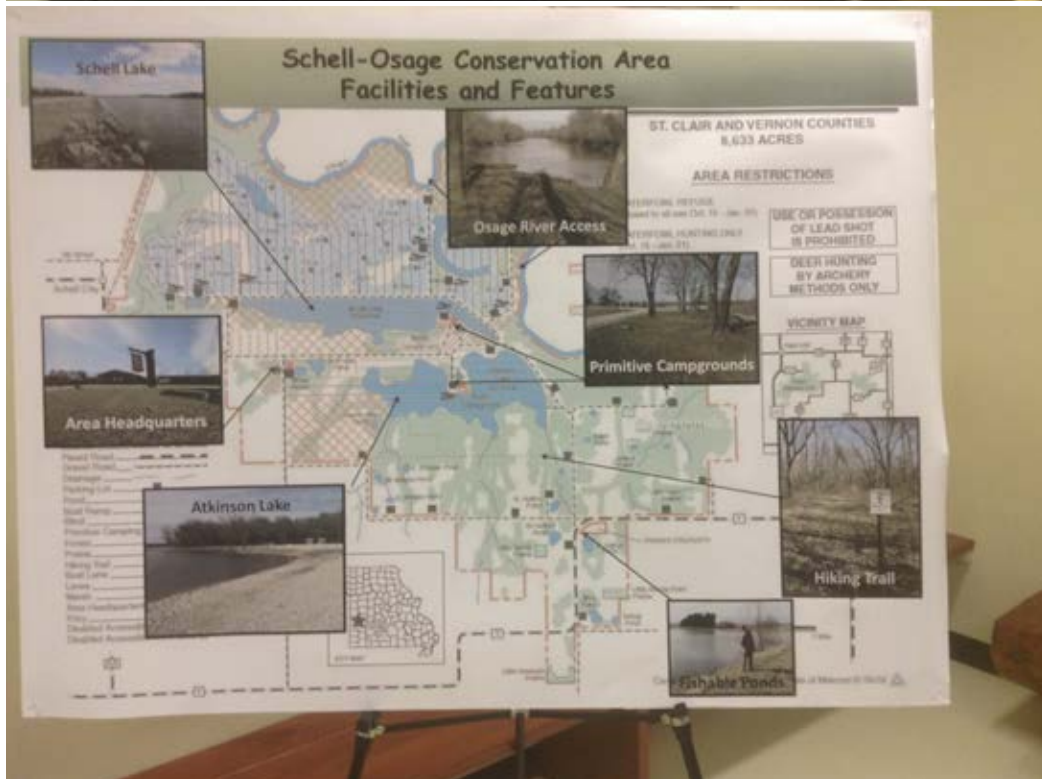


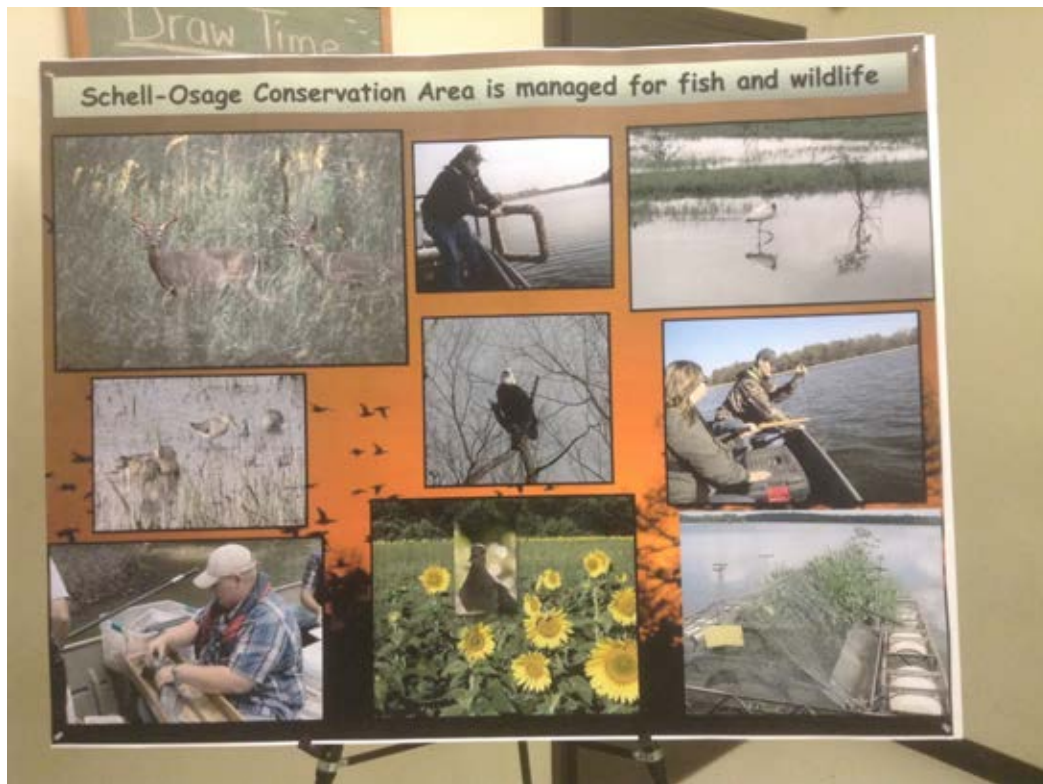
Photos of Shell-Osage Conservation Area Open House

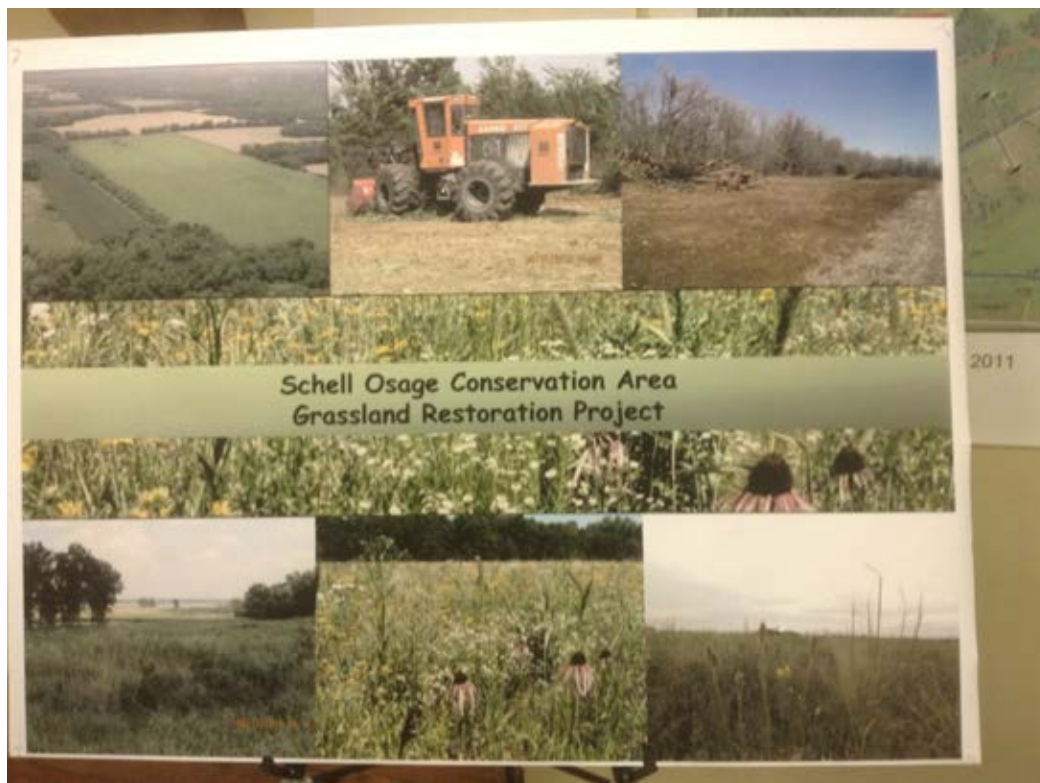
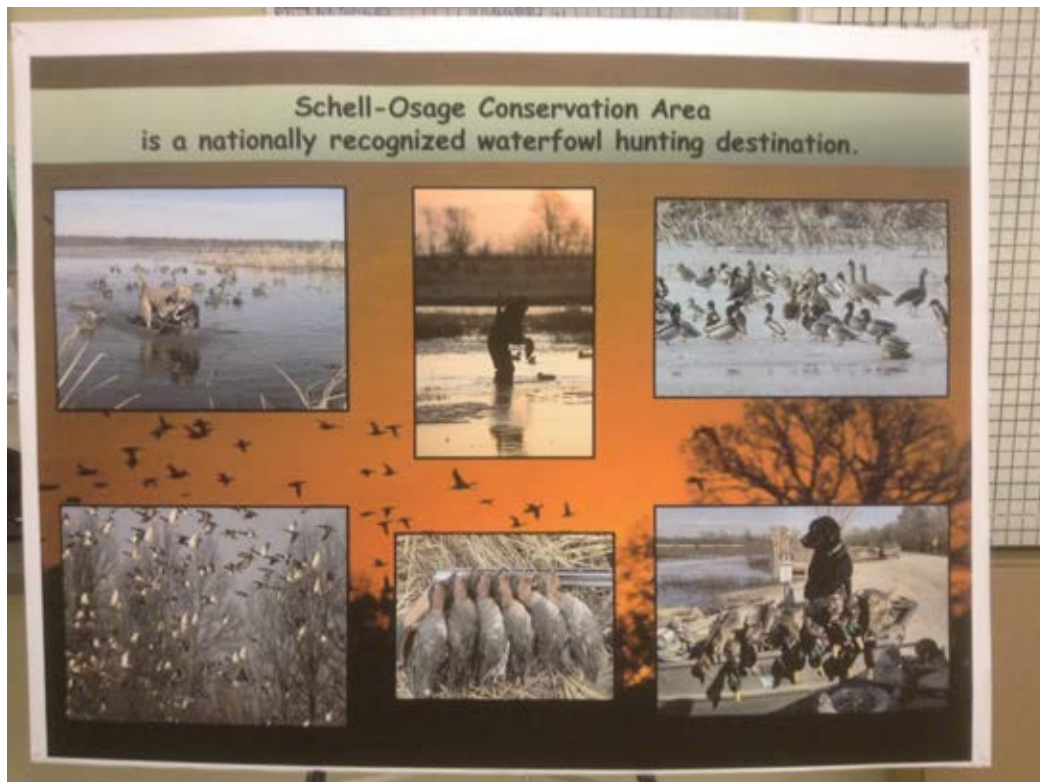












Schell Osage Wetland Renovation

Golden Anniversary Wetland Initiative




Why Schell-Osage:

Schell-Osage is one of the oldest wetland conservation areas in the state. The wetland with soil water supply tubes were completed in 1968 and operated as waterfowl hunting to 1984. Over the years ducks and geese have been gathering there to winter. The wetland has been a refuge for waterfowl for over 50 years.

Challenges:

Schell-Osage has a long history of being a refuge for waterfowl. However, it is not a refuge for waterfowl anymore. The wetland has been a refuge for waterfowl for over 50 years. The wetland has been a refuge for waterfowl for over 50 years. The wetland has been a refuge for waterfowl for over 50 years.

Renovation Goals:

Goal 1: Improve floodplain function
How this may be addressed:
Floodplain ability to manage wetland habitat. Considering the water management and proper placement of water control structures to maintain the flexibility of existing water control at the right depths, as well as being able to take it off.

Goal 2: Maintain the use of birds for waterfowl hunting opportunities
How this may be addressed:
Keep some of the birds in the area and provide for other use for waterfowl hunting. The area is a refuge for waterfowl hunting.

Goal 3: Utilize readily available water supply from Truman Reservoir
How this may be addressed:
The water out of Truman Reservoir flows with a permanent gate. There is a daily flow of water. The water is available for waterfowl hunting.

Goal 4: Improve the wetland habitat managed as waterfowl refuge
How this may be addressed:
Floodplain ability to manage wetland habitat on the edge of Truman Reservoir.

What to expect and when:

- The wetland will be renovated in 2015.
- The wetland will be renovated in 2015.
- The wetland will be renovated in 2015.

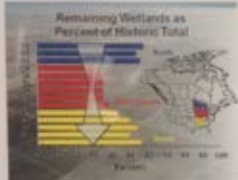
How to stay informed:

The Department will be highlighting progress on the wetland renovation in the future. The Department will be highlighting progress on the wetland renovation in the future.

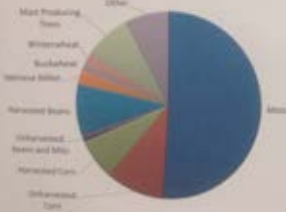
Schell-Osage has a rich waterfowl hunting heritage. The upcoming wetland renovation seeks to ensure this tradition extends into the future.

Waterfowl and Wetland Management in Missouri

Habitat

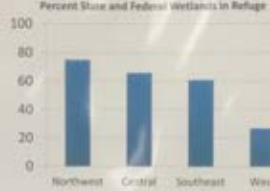


Remaining Wetlands as Percent of Historic Total




Habitat on Department Intensively Managed Wetlands

Waterfowl

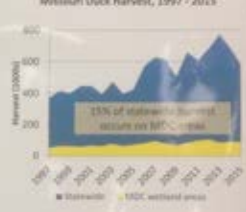


Percent State and Federal Wetlands in Refuge

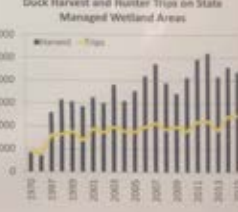


Managed Wetlands Serve as Refueling Areas

Hunters



Missouri Duck Harvest, 1997 - 2015



Duck Harvest and Hunter Trips on State Managed Wetland Areas

THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH SCHELL-OSAGE CONSERVATION AREA IDEA GATHERING PHASE (Nov. 1, 2016-Feb. 15, 2017)

The Schell-Osage Conservation Area Idea Gathering Stage was available for a public idea gathering period Nov. 1, 2016- Feb. 15, 2017. The Missouri Department of Conservation received 42 comments from 39 respondents. A brief summary of public input themes can be found below. The area planning team will take comments into consideration as they draft a 10-year management plan for Schell-Osage Conservation Area. The draft area management plan will be available online (likely fall 2017) for a two-month-long comment period at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. After that comment period, the plan will be finalized, and the final plan posted online.

Terrestrial Resource Management

Wetland Management/Renovation

- Suggests improving control of water on the area. Invest in a permanent pump station.
- Hopes renovation is completed in phases so the entire area is not closed during construction.
- Suggests reestablishing hardwoods in the A Pool area (e.g., pecan and pin oak). Suggests keeping as many trees as possible in the A Pool area.
- Suggests expanding bottomland hardwoods habitat to the west of Schell Lake, south of G Pool, and along Lost Creek.
- Suggests removing trees from field/wetland edges so geese can feed easier.
- Suggests improving waterfowl habitat.
- Suggests using Bob Brown and Grand Pass conservation areas as models for providing waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunities.
- Suggests making more portions similar to C Pool, with more water in the refuge pool and more trees (in lines and clusters).
- Suggests improving marsh access.
- Suggests managing the area as a Canada goose stopover area and wintering area. Suggests restoring a large area of marsh to provide a refuge for Canada geese without hunting pressure.
- Re-claim and improve habitat in the old C-10/11 waterfowl areas, north of D and E Pools.
- Interested in learning how Ducks Unlimited will help with the Schell-Osage CA renovation.
- Suggests planting more crops on area. Suggests planting more corn in refuge areas.
- Opposes planting crops in wetland areas.

- Suggest adding winding levees along wetland pools to allow for easier walk-in access to the hunting pools during waterfowl season and more shoreline fishing access in the summer.

Upland Management

- Concerned that large brush piles from logging conducted several years ago are still on the ground.
- Would like to see prairie chicken populations restored to their former numbers. Would like to know if MDC is restoring prairie chickens at Schell Osage CA.
- Opposes removing trees for prairie chickens at the expense of deer and turkey habitat.
- Suggests hinge-cutting trees and edge-feathering open upland areas to improve rabbit habitat.
- Suggests planting warm-season grasses in areas that have been logged.
- Supports continued cropping and annual rotation of area fields. Department oversight of these areas has been excellent.
- Would like to see some upland tracts managed for mourning doves and dove hunting.

Invasive Species

- Suggests allowing hog hunting on the area. Concerned about seeing hogs without traps nearby.
- Supports how invasive vines have been controlled. The areas where invasive species were cut down are beginning to recover and restore.

Aquatic Resource Management

Lake Management

- Suggests enhancing fishing at Schell and Atkinson Lakes.
- Suggests stocking hybrid striped bass in Atkinson Lake.
- Concerned that most lakes are silted in, limiting fishing opportunities.

Public Use Management

Deer/Turkey Hunting

- Suggests allowing archery deer hunting in waterfowl refuge areas, possibly through a managed hunt.
- Suggests moving refuge boundary away from river to allow for additional archery deer hunting.
- Suggests enhancing deer and turkey hunting.

- Suggests that the deer population is low. Concerned that too many does are killed on the area. + Suggests removing the four-point rule to allow for continued buck harvest and limiting doe harvest to improve herd health.
- Appreciates receiving a special use permit to take disabled family member hunting.
- Suggests allowing firearms deer hunting on the conservation area.
- Supports keeping the conservation area as an archery-only deer hunting area. Appreciates bow hunting at Schell-Osage.

Waterfowl Hunting

- Likes the waterfowl area as is and likes how it is managed (e.g., likes current layout of blinds, number of blinds, number of walk-in positions, and waterfowl drawing system). Suggest minimizing any changes to the waterfowl area.
- Would like to see changes in the reservation system. Does not support adopting the quick-draw system for waterfowl hunting. The reservation system should guarantee a blind. Missouri residents should receive preference for receiving blinds.
- Suggests having a split waterfowl hunting season. Many migratory birds are not arriving to the area until the hunting season is over.
- Opposes goose hunting at Schell-Osage CA outside of waterfowl season.
- Suggests closing Schell-Osage to waterfowl hunting. Restore to original marsh and keep as refuge.
- Suggests having a shell limit to prevent sky-busting, even though it would be difficult to enforce.

Waterfowl Hunting Blinds

- Suggests returning to old style of blinds. Suggests keeping blinds.
- Suggests removing 1950s style mound blinds; make area more like Grand Pass or Four Rivers conservation areas.
- Suggests expanding areas open to blind hunting.
- Suggests providing two dog boxes at the end of each blind.
- Suggests removing all blinds, except for ADA-accessible blinds.
- Suggests removing the G2 blind (and possibly others in F Pool) to reduce overcrowding.
- Suggests keeping three blinds in A Pool and not adding more.
- Recommends having a hard-surface map in the area headquarters building where blinds light up once chosen by a hunting party.

Camping

- Likes to camp at Schell-Osage CA. Suggests adding electric hookups.

Fishing Access

- Suggests adding a boat ramp to access the Osage River.
- Suggest adding a concrete boat ramp at Atkinson Lake.
- Suggests improving low-water boat launching access at Barber Lake.
- Suggests providing more year-round disabled-fishing access areas. Schell-Osage CA lakes are closed to fishing during waterfowl season.

Wildlife Watching

- Loves watching wildlife at the area, such as deer, turkey, geese, eagles, duck, and bobcat.

Trails

- Suggests adding more walking trails around the area to provide better fishing and hunting access.
- Requests mowed paths through newly restored grasslands to allow access to the woods for archery deer hunting.
- Suggests developing 10-12 miles of multi-use (hike/bike/horse) trails in the upland area (east, south, and southeast of Atkinson Lake). Offers help in developing and maintaining multi-use trails.
- Requests that all trails be disabled accessible.
- Opposes mountain biking on the area.

Other

- Loves hunting mushrooms at the area. Suggests allowing mushroom hunting during the winter in areas that are currently only accessible to waterfowl hunters.

Administrative Considerations

Area Infrastructure

- Suggests adding a parking lot on the northwest edge of the property (along the road near the Osage River).

Boundary Line Maintenance

- Make sure boundary lines are adequately marked.
- Suggests installing a fence at the end of 1275 Road in St. Clair County. Neighbors along this road park trucks and tractors on the conservation area, shoot on the area, and allow dogs to be off-leash on the area.

Other Considerations

- Appreciates the staff at Schell-Osage CA. They are very helpful, hard-working, informative, and pleasant.

- Appreciates how the waterfowl area is managed. Wishes other conservation areas were managed like Schell-Osage CA.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Schell-Osage Conservation Area Open House Flyer



How are conservation areas important to you?

The Missouri Department of Conservation is updating management plans for our almost 1,000 conservation areas and we want your comments.

Schell-Osage Conservation Area

The Missouri Department of Conservation is inviting public comment regarding Schell-Osage Conservation Area in St. Clair and Vernon Counties to aid staff in developing a 10-year management plan for the area. Interested persons or groups—including recreational users, neighboring landowners, conservation groups, elected officials and government agencies—are invited to offer input through a comment card or online at the website listed below.

Comment period closes

February 15, 2017



Take a look at management plans and share your comments online at **mdc.mo.gov/areaplans**, or get a copy of plans and comment forms at your local MDC office.

Appendix 2. Schell-Osage Conservation Area Info Sheet

Share your ideas about Schell-Osage Conservation Area

The Missouri Department of Conservation is beginning to develop a new 10-year area management plan at Schell-Osage Conservation Area. We welcome your comments!



This 8,633-acre area in St. Clair and Vernon counties features a combination of habitats including wetlands, upland and bottomland forest, cropland, old fields, and lakes and ponds.

It is one of nearly 1,000 conservation areas owned or managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Conservation areas support the Department's mission by offering places to restore and conserve fish, forest, and wildlife resources, and providing opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources. Conservation areas are different than state or local parks that may place a greater emphasis on team sports, recreational activities, or social gatherings.

What's a Conservation Area Management Plan?

These plans document strategies for natural resource management and public use on conservation areas. Conservation area plans also help communicate an area's purpose and management direction to staff and interested citizens. Area management plans serve as a management plan for the property with a focus on terrestrial and aquatic resource management, public use management, and administrative considerations. Missouri Department of Conservation staff will begin drafting the 10-year Schell-Osage Area Management Plan this winter, which will be available for an additional public comment period in coming months.

Why do you want my ideas now?

This fall and winter we are working to gather ideas to help inform us when developing our draft area management plan. We would love to hear from visitors who care about and use Schell-Osage Conservation Area.

Questions? Contact Amy Buechler, amy.buechler@mdc.mo.gov, 573-522-4115 x3252.

Comment online at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans or mail comments to: Amy Buechler, Missouri Department of Conservation, Policy Coordination, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102. Comment period closes February 15, 2017.

Appendix 3. Schell-Osage Conservation Area Open House Press Release

MDC welcomes comments on Schell-Osage area plan

Public is invited to a Jan. 26 open house to discuss planning for the area

Nevada, Mo. – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) wants to know your suggestions for the Schell-Osage Conservation Area in Vernon and St. Clair counties. MDC is in the multi-year process of updating management plans for almost 1,000 conservation areas throughout the state and invites public comments.

MDC is inviting public comment about the Schell-Osage Conservation Area to aid staff in developing a 10-year management plan for the area. Interested persons or groups are invited to bring their ideas to an open house 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 26, at the area headquarters, 4662 South 2950 Road, southeast of Schell City. MDC welcomes input on plans from recreational users, neighboring landowners, conservation groups, elected officials and government agencies.

The public is welcome to share ideas, compliments or improvement suggestions with MDC staff at the open house. Staff will answer questions about management practices at Schell-Osage or about conservation in general. Visitors will also be able to fill out comment sheets. More information about the open house is available by calling 417-432-3414.

The public is also invited to share ideas online now through Feb. 15 at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. Schell-Osage Conservation Area is a premier wetland and upland destination for hunters, birders, hikers, photographers and naturalists. The Osage River flows past the 8,635-acre area's northern boundary. Schell-Osage has large wetland areas and two large fishing lakes. Atkinson Lake is 461 acres and Schell Lake is 355 acres. The area also has several ponds for fishing. Some upland portions of the area are being restored to native grassland habitat. Five small remnant prairies are part of the grassland management.

Statewide, MDC conservation areas cover almost one million public acres for the purpose of restoring and conserving forest, fish and wildlife resources, and for providing opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources. Most Missourians are within a 30-minute drive of an MDC conservation area.

Conservation Area Management Plans focus on natural resource management and public use on conservation areas. The plans do not address regulations on hunting, fishing and other area uses, which are set by the Conservation Commission and enforced under the Wildlife Code of Missouri. MDC will consider all ideas received and will work to balance the issues and interests identified with the responsibility of managing areas for the present and future benefits to forest, fish, wildlife, and people. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into area plans and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, the best roles of the property in its local, regional and statewide context, and on the professional expertise of MDC staff.



Photo: The Schell-Osage Conservation Area offers important wetlands for waterfowl and shore birds, and the area also offers fishing and upland hunting.
Missouri Department of Conservation photo

MEDIA CONTACT:

Bill Graham

Media Specialist

816-759-7305 x1131

Bill.Graham@mdc.mo.gov

Appendix 4. Schell-Osage Conservation Area Open House Comment Form



How is Schell-Osage Conservation Area important to you?

Personal Information

Name: _____

Organization (if any): _____

E-mail: _____

☐ Yes, I want to receive e-mail updates about the Schell-Osage Area Plan.

☐ Yes, I want to receive e-mail updates about other conservation area plans.

Zip code: _____

Your ideas

The Missouri Department of Conservation is beginning to develop a new 10-year area management plan at Schell-Osage Conservation Area. To help inform this effort, we welcome your ideas about the management of Schell-Osage!



(Continued on back)

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Thank you for your comments! We hope to hear from a broad range of public interests and will listen and consider all ideas. Decisions on which ideas to incorporate into the conservation area plan and on how to best incorporate them will be based on the property's purpose, its physical and biological conditions and capabilities, available financial and staffing resources, the best role of the property in its local, regional and state-wide context, and on the professional expertise of Department staff.

Mail to: Amy Buechler, MDC, Policy Coordination, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102 (postmark by February 15). You can also comment online at mdc.mo.gov/areaplans. Comment period closes February 15, 2017.

Appendix 5. Comments Received at Schell-Osage Conservation Area Open House (January 9, 2017)

Possibly open area along river to bowhunting. Currently it is refuge. Open part of area "Goose Pen Pond" to bowhunting. Maybe south half. Currently it is refuge. Thanks,

I believe Schell Osage has good management. I would like to see all trails handycap access. My wife loves to hunt and is in a wheel chair, she need access to all ground, a regular hunter gets. The Conservation Department has done a good job concerning handycap people. I think if a person has a caregiver such as myself they should determine where he or she can hunt. P.S. Thank you for the speachel permits so I could take her to hunt. The deer population I believe is way down.

I believe that we need to keep as many trees in the area as much as possible in A pool and manage the area of the blinds with more food sources also in A pool. Leave the 3 blinds in A pool but not add any more and leave it a timber hunting area. Quit taking timber out of the holes so that we don't have to combine spots like T-slot and deep hole which use to be both very awesome areas to hunt but we are losing so much cover maybe start trying to replace some of the cover in the areas so that we can have the most amount of hunting possible. I also belive that we need to continue to try to have a split season due to we are not getting the migration of birds until the season is over so would be better to have split to have more birds during season. Thank you for Schell-Osage and being able to hunt here the years we have.

Appendix 6. Comments Received During Schell-Osage Conservation Area Idea Gathering Phase (November 1, 2016-February 15 2017)

<p>I have grown up visiting Schell-Osage and surrounding wildlife areas with my grandfather. We have a heightened interest in plant life and waterfowl. We have noticed the natural plant habitat has been great over the years, but the waterfowl migration seems to be dispersed. We would encourage Schell-Osage to invest additionally in wildlife habitat. Keep up the great work. Regards,</p>
<p>I love boating in from the river, however there is a lot of river edge that is solid timber that is closed because of water fowl. This is no where near the ducks, make the edge just shy of the edge of the marsh so we can hunt the timber and we won't bother the ducks. Let's maximize the land for all types of hunting. I am both a waterfowl and a bow hunter. The current regulation limits deer hunting with no benefit to ducks. Please revise. One other topic- timber management. Log what needs logged the last logging job I thought was fine but don't drop trees and make a 20acre brush pile that is still a mess 7 years later. This was done in 2 areas I used to hunt. Can't even walk 10 yds into it. Waste of ground. Thanks for listening.</p>
<p>I would like to see warm season grasses planted in the areas that have been logged and grinded. also I would like to see a fence or something put up at the end of 1275 road in st.clair county. the people at the very end use the conservation land as if its their own they park their trucks and tractors on it and also use it for their own personal shooting range shooting into the area .you also cannot walk that part of the area without their dogs trying to bite you. hunters have quit using that part of the area for that reason. thank you</p>
<p>I visit schell-Osage very often and have a few suggestions on the area. I love to camp in the two campgrounds but the issue of no power makes for a very noisy night trying to sleep! It would be fantastic to get power to the campgrounds to eliminate this issue. I know multiple people that said they would even pay a fee to camp if there was power on site! I would also like to see a boat ramp put in the Osage river. Many people every year put in at first river road and get stuck and nearly lose their vehicle. A boat ramp would bring many more visitors to the area and make safety a priority for river access! I also believe you need to open up hog hunting on this area because I know of multiple groups of hogs and there's not a trap near them. Your not going to trap them off...if you want them gone put a \$25 bounty for them and watch the trucks haul them in for you! But we all know the department wants more funding from the gov. Thanks</p>
<p>I think that for waterfowl the area is managed well but I think that marsh access could be improved. The biggest change I would like to see would be firearms deer hunting and a concrete boat ramp on Atkinson Lake. I also wish that that lake was also stocked with Hybrid Striped Bass. Thanks</p>
<p>I live just south of the SO CA, and I love watching the geese, Eagles, ducks, turkeys, deer, bobcat, etc. It's a great place to live, and I enjoy hunting mushrooms. The only downfall, I can't</p>

mushroom hunt a lot of the land during the winter because it is only accessible to waterfowl hunters.
Hinge cutting some trees and edge feathering around some of the open upland areas for enhanced habitat for rabbits.
Interested in hearing how DU will be helping in this process.
I would like to see the area waterfowl habitat & hunting opportunities modeled after Grand Pass & Bob Brown. Remove all the blinds except for the ADA blinds.
The area floods out a lot damaging the resources that have been invested in trying to establish the wetlands. I would like to see improvements to the levee system and pumping abilities for flood control. It would also be nice if the pools had some winding levees in them that allowed for easier walk in access to hunting pools during waterfowl season, and more shoreline fishing access during the summer. Most of the lakes are very silted in limiting productive fishing opportunities. Barber Lake needs better low water boat launching capabilities. More walking trails around the areas to allow easier fishing/hunting access. Increased levy and flood protection would also lead to more productive crops with a higher yield for the farmer, the dept, and the wildlife.
I hope Schell Osage never adopts the quick draw system for waterfowl hunting. As for the renovation plans. MDC has many dedicated professionals in all aspects of this plan. Why would they need advice from a retired tire man?
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this wonderful resource that my son and I have utilized since the early 1980's and continue to hunt on to this day. While there maybe those that ask for significant changes to the current management of the waterfowl hunting area at Schell Osage I would suggest that perhaps consideration of minimal changes to that particular part of Schell Osage Conservation Area be considered. I realize there are issues with the water control structures, water pumping issues for filling pools, ongoing blind maintenance that needs to take place, perhaps some silt removal (in the boat channels and pools) and flood control that are of concern but I would like to see the current layout and number of blinds as well as the number of walk in positions and the operation of the waterfowl drawing system remain as is. Though my comments are few I would hope that the impact to the current waterfowl area, as previously noted, be held to a minimum so as to minimize the impact to those of us the utilize this portion of the property. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment. Like wise thanks to Josh and the staff at Schell Osage as they are all very informative and very pleasant to visit with regarding the area.
I have been a committed bowhunter of Schell for over 25 years now. It was the site of my very first bowhunting experience and I have loved this area ever since. I introduced my brother to this area over 20 years ago and we have consistently hunted the property together every season since. Let me first say THANK YOU for such a job well done by MDC. I really have very few complaints. Suggestions. Too many does are killed I think. When I first hunted Schell it was highly overpopulated but seems to be suffering from a pendulum effect now. Limiting doe

harvest would increase overall deer herd size I think. Perhaps only 2-3 years would restore it to healthy levels I believe. TSI was a failed effort on the property I think. Perhaps if there was a cleanup of the left over tops & culled trees it would have been ok, but the choking of the forest floor was horrible & ineffective to natural forest restoration. Plus it made much of the beautiful healthy old growth forest turn into an overgrown briar/bramble/vine infested landscape that was not only impassable but unnatural if the desired effect was reforestation. Crop rotation and the annual planting of the large farm type fields is a must. Through contracting and MDC oversight & control, this perpetual provision of food & healthy maintenance of these large fields has been excellent when utilized. Please continue! Improving the parking situation near the Osage River on the property edge road that is accessed out of Schell City (the road that was under legal dispute for several years but finally belongs to the people to access the back edge of Schell Osage CA) would be nice. My thought would be across railroad tracks in the edge of the large open field where feral hogs used to be trapped by MDC. This would allow vehicles to clear all roads and give parking for convenience. The hydroaxing of some of the areas overgrown with invasive vines over past 2 years was a great plan. It really made some dysfunctional areas begin healthy recovery & restoration. Good work. One last suggestion. It is unhealthy for wildlife to live unmolested for years upon years. The refuge is a vital part of a healthy animal population, but hunting is a part of natural predation & should be a part of the overall plan. The refuge closes to archery hunting in mid October. This minimizes the healthy impact of deer harvest to a point of negligible effect. It is my opinion that the refuge should be opened, even if only to limited drawn numbers, until at least the opening of Missouri Firearms season to allow a minimal harvest of both buck & doe to increase the overall health of the deer herd ensconced within the area known as "refuge". Thank you for hearing my thoughts, thank you for what great things you have done to give us such a lifetime of fun & food! We love to bowhunt Schell and have had great success in part due to MDC's hard work & dedication to our million acres of public lands!!! Thank you all so much.

Overall I am relatively happy with the management of Schell Osage CA. There are some areas I would like to comment on. For the next 5 years, doe harvest should be limited to 1 antlerless tag (in addition to regular bow tags). The does have been hit hard the last few years with unlimited tags. That balance needs to be better. The last two years I have had a 4 to 1 buck to doe ratio (4 bucks to 1 doe). That is not a healthy ratio. With the reduction in buck tags available statewide, and the reduced doe numbers, I believe you should remove the 4 point rule. This should allow for a continued buck harvest, without overharvest of does. Eliminating the 4 point rule and limiting extra doe harvest for 5 years will increase herd health. Additionally, areas of the refuge, particularly those areas east and those north of Headquarters, should be open to bow hunters. Bow hunters are not intrusive enough to bother the waterfowl in the refuge. Finally, I applaud the return of grasslands, but request mowed paths that will still allow access to woods behind the newly introduced grasslands. I have hunted Schell for more than 25 years. It is one of my favorite places to hunt. If you act now, you can continue the great management. If you fail to act, the pendulum will swing too far the other way. Thank you for the opportunity to comment

I know duck hunting does bring in alot of money for THE MDC but fishing does as well. And for the safety of hunters and fishermen I know is the reason for closing areas during duck season . But I am disabled and Schell Osage wildlife refuge is one of the only places around that I can pull up to the water and start fishing without lugging my fishing poles and tackle away to enjoy my day fishing. There is several time in the last few years that after October and before February that were great weather to go fishing . But low and behold Schell is off limits to fish. For i know i am not the only person that rely on Schell to fish.
Bring back the Prairie Chicken in former numbers!!
I would like and hope the work is done in phases as not to shut the whole area down while the work is being done. I would also like to see the blinds have 2 dog boxes at each end of the blind. Thanks
(Hardcopy comment received 1/11/2017): Keep the blinds, just put in more crops.
(Hardcopy comment received 1/11/2017):No Crops, Keep Blinds, More tree lines and clusters, More water in refuge pools, Personally I would model it like C pool
(Hardcopy comment received 1/11/2017): Go back to old style blinds
(Hardcopy comment received 1/11/2017): Reservation system should guarantee a blind. Only place pas I-27.
(Hardcopy comment received 1/11/2017): Make maps hard surface and put lights on in the blinds. When someone picks a blind, it lights up letting everyone else in the area know. Faster choices, faster process.
(Hardcopy comment received 1/11/2017): Great place to hunt. You haur done a great job providing blinds, food, and birds. I wish other game & fish/conservation would do the same. Thank you for your hard work.
Would like to see fishing enhances in Schell & Atkinson lakes. Also, whatever steps that can be taken to enhance deer and turkey hunting. Seems like there are frequently property boundary issues. Make sure boundary lines are adequately marked. I'm more concerned about local folks encroaching and fencing off or restricting access to the CA lands.
Bicycles should not be allowed in any natural area. They are inanimate objects and have no rights. There is also no right to mountain bike. That was settled in federal court in 1996: http://mjvande.info/mtb10.htm . It's dishonest of mountain bikers to say that they don't have access to trails closed to bikes. They have EXACTLY the same access as everyone else -- ON FOOT! Why isn't that good enough for mountain bikers? They are all capable of walking....A favorite myth of mountain bikers is that mountain biking is no more harmful to wildlife, people, and the environment than hiking, and that science supports that view. Of course, it's not true. To settle the matter once and for all, I read all of the research they cited, and wrote a review of the research on mountain biking impacts (see http://mjvande.info/scb7.htm). I found that of the seven studies they cited, (1) all were written by mountain bikers, and (2) in every case, the authors misinterpreted their own data, in order to come to the conclusion that they favored. They also studiously avoided mentioning another scientific study (Wisdom et al) which did not favor

mountain biking, and came to the opposite conclusions. Those were all experimental studies. Two other studies (by White et al and by Jeff Marion) used a survey design, which is inherently incapable of answering that question (comparing hiking with mountain biking). I only mention them because mountain bikers often cite them, but scientifically, they are worthless. Mountain biking accelerates erosion, creates V-shaped ruts, kills small animals and plants on and next to the trail, drives wildlife and other trail users out of the area, and, worst of all, teaches kids that the rough treatment of nature is okay (it's NOT!). What's good about THAT? To see exactly what harm mountain biking does to the land, watch this 5-minute video: <http://vimeo.com/48784297>. In addition to all of this, it is extremely dangerous: http://mjvande.info/mtb_dangerous.htm .For more information: <http://mjvande.info/mtbfaq.htm> . The common thread among those who want more recreation in our parks is total ignorance about and disinterest in the wildlife whose homes these parks are. Yes, if humans are the only beings that matter, it is simply a conflict among humans (but even then, allowing bikes on trails harms the MAJORITY of park users -- hikers and equestrians -- who can no longer safely and peacefully enjoy their parks). The parks aren't gymnasiums or racetracks or even human playgrounds. They are WILDLIFE HABITAT, which is precisely why they are attractive to humans. Activities such as mountain biking, that destroy habitat, violate the charter of the parks. Even kayaking and rafting, which give humans access to the entirety of a water body, prevent the wildlife that live there from making full use of their habitat, and should not be allowed. Of course those who think that only humans matter won't understand what I am talking about -- an indication of the sad state of our culture and educational system.

When i was in college in the late 1960s, i visited this conservation area for the first time with an ornithology class. We arrived very early one foggy morning to listen to the prairie chickens booming--listened only, as we could see nothing through the fog. Fifty years later, i remember that morning with crystal clarity and wonder--lying on the damp grass in the blinds with the ethereal fog swirling all around and that all-encompassing sound was surreal. A few years ago, i lived just north of El Dorado Springs, and visited this area again several times. Although it is still amazing, i was saddened to learn that the prairie chickens were no longer there. Since Wah-Kon-Tah was just down the road from me, i was aware of the re-population effort there. (I even took part in the release of American Burying Beetles there! Great fun--i hope they established successfully.) I wonder if efforts to re-establish the prairie chicken are being made at Schell-Osage. They should be there. I am fiercely proud of the MDC and the work that all of the sister agencies do in partnership. My only regret at this stage in life is that, since i now live across the state line, i can no longer have a Stream Team license plate on my car!

I'm interested in following all plans in my area.

Re-establishment of hardwoods in A-Pool area.

This is the area that I use mostly for waterfowl. Would like any plans to include those ideas such as water control in seasons that have too much precipitation and those seasons that have too little precipitation. Along those ideas maybe an expanded area opened to additional blind hunting.

I feel like there are a few blinds that should be removed. G2 especially. F pool seems to be a bit over crowded around f2 f4 f3 f9 and f5. The staff working at Schell is excellent and always very helpful. I'm very appreciative of their hard work on a place that is very special to me. I also appreciate the staff trying to stop the excessive sky busting. The problem seems to be getting worse every season. A shell limit would be difficult to police but a solution to the problem.

I've hunted around Schell since 1981 and this area has been a big part of my life, my waterfowl home and headquarters since this date. I've seen many changes in this time, a lot of them out of our control. However as an older goose hunter here is what my ideas are to make Schell more of a Canada Goose wintering area, much of what it was like in the 1980's as the birds were leaving Swan Lake. 1) There should be a large area of a shallow marsh that both Canadas and Mallards can enjoy without any hunting pressure. Now all of the marsh area is in the public hunting areas. Both lakes now are fine but these are not really deep water birds. 2) No goose hunting should be allowed at Schell inside once the duck season closes, even if the season is open outside. This will help with a January migration where the birds can come in without being harassed on the area. There are plenty of opportunities for public hunters to hunt geese along with ducks during the regular duck season. 3) There should be set aside, along with the marsh above, corn areas to hold birds once they are in the area. While crops have to be rotated of course, there is not enough corn for the size of the refuge to attract birds and never has been. These should also be away from harassment from blind hunters inside. 4) Restoring of Bell Pond, or something similar completely out of bounds from public hunting. Now only the two large lakes provide any resting point. The geese will respond to this type of solitude, instead of having to head to Dane's to get away from the pressure inside Schell. 5) Absolutely no field hunting for geese inside Schell. For the small amount of harvest that takes place in the fields, this adds to the pressure geese feel already. The low numbers of geese the past five years at Schell will verify this claim. While we can blame the weather and resting areas up north, these are not the only factors. 6) The development of a warm water pond, perhaps with the Bell Pond idea. There should be a way without a power plant in use to keep some water open during the winter freeze, once again away from public hunting. 7) Finally as long as you are taking ideas and redoing Schell, is there really a reason for any waterfowl public hunting to take place here? Why not restore it to an original marsh land and let the birds migrate naturally to this area without hunting pressure. From being in the area so long and talking with older folks, this was a waterfowl migration area anyway before Truman went in and the state built Schell. Why not make the whole area a waterfowl refuge. The state of Mo. doesn't collect fees for hunting this any longer, and for years it was only \$4 per hunter. The license fees should help with the cost of managing this area. Thanks for the opportunity to give my ideas. The folks that have ran and now run Schell-Osage and work there are some of the finest Missouri has to offer in their field. It has been a blessing to know them and the work they perform each year on hunters and conservationists behalf.

This is a MISSOURI conservation area. It is very frustrating when I take a day off work or go there on my day off and not get drawn but several out of state people do. Missouri residents should get blinds first. This is Missouri residents tax dollars!

1. Stop the destruction of the timber/upland areas in the name of Prairie chickens, at the expense of deer & turkey hunting habitat & hunting opportunity 2. To make this a better Canada Goose stop over, clear edges of fields of trees/debris, against waterfowl refuge bodies of water, so geese may walk out of water & loaf in fields 3. Have the crop % that must be left per field, not be on the edges, thus the poorest producing ground. Some edges of corn do not even produce, due to the drip line of trees taking the water/nutrients. This would provide a better resource of food for wildlife

First, thank you for the opportunity to provide input on development of the Schell-Osage CA Management Plan. Equestrian trail riders in Vernon, St. Clair and Bates Counties are greatly underserved with respect to public land riding opportunities. To address this lack of opportunity Schell-Osage CA is on a priority list of Conservation Areas recommended for multi-use trail development in the 2015 “Expanding Public Land Multi-Use Trails in Missouri” proposal by Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen. Much of Schell-Osage CA possesses soil, landscape, flood hazard and public use characteristics that are not conducive to multi-use trail development. The upland area east, south and southeast of Atkinson Lake, however, exhibits most desirable characteristics for development of a multi-use trail system. This portion of the CA is of adequate size for development of a minimum of 10-12 miles of trails. Topography and landscape (predominantly upland), a variety of cover types, and a minimum of conflicting uses also represent positive features. Trails should be located to maintain adequate separation from fishing and waterfowl hunting areas, and they must be located carefully to minimize problems with erodible and seasonally saturated soils—all quite easily done. The location, off Missouri Route Y, not far off U.S. 54 and MO 82, would provide safe and convenient access to the CA via hard surface roads. SMMBCH offers our services (availability of volunteers permitting) to help decide on the best location and then clear and mark the trails. We further offer to assist the Area Manager to develop a partnership with local trail users to assist with development and maintenance with the trails and associated infrastructure. Thank you again for the opportunity to offer input.

Just make it like grand pass or four rivers...get rid of the 1950's style mound blinds

Increase the dependability of seasonal wetlands being floodable by investing in a permanent pump station. Expand hardwood timber bottomland habitat by developing the bottomland hardwood tract to the west of Schell Lake, South of G-Pool, along Lost Creek. Re-claim and improve the habitat in what was once the old C-10/11 waterfowl areas north of D/E Pools. This would expand hunter opportunities and re-open a mixed hardwood/softwood/moist soil habitat. Most of that habitat mix was severely damaged due to numerous floods dating back to the early 90's. Manage some of the upland tracts for mourning doves and dove hunters.

I don't water fowl hunt (much..). I would support actions that enhance deer and turkey hunting opportunities. I believe this is an archery/muzzleloader CA. Let's keep it that way. Also, water ever can be done to enhance fishing opportunities at Schell and Atkinson lakes. Also, please make better effort to mark boundaries. Both to keep area users on right side of fence and to keep locals from encroaching on CA lands.

Schell Osage is a very well run Conservation Area! I use the area very often for waterfowl and small game hunting. The only changes I would think need to be made would include a pump station on the Osage RIVER to guarantee water in the marshes and the lakes. If major renovations to the marshes are in the works and parts of the areas need to be closed during duck season, that's ok as long as part of the area remains open. Many duck hunters rely on Schell Osage as their primary waterfowl hunting area and it would be a shame to deny them access for an entire duck season.

Installation of water pump station. Re-introduction of hardwoods (pecan & pin oak) in A-Pool area.